

Hobbies

Olympic coins at a discount until May 15

By Roger Boye

Collectors have until May 15 to order proof Olympic coins from the U.S. government at significant discounts.

During the pre-issue period Uncle Sam is charging \$23 for a U.S. silver dollar, \$205 for a \$5 gold piece, and \$225 for a two-coin set. Official retail prices will be \$29, \$235 and \$260, respectively, when the coins go on sale at banks and elsewhere this summer.

Both keepsakes commemorate U.S. participation in the 1988 Olympics, and part of the revenue from each sale will support the training of U.S. athletes. The dollar contains about three-quarters of an ounce of silver, and the \$5 piece, one-quarter ounce of gold.

To order, send a check or money order to the United States Mint, 1988 U.S. Olympic Coins, Box 7710, Philadelphia, Pa. 19162-0023. Allow several months for delivery.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Treasury has modified designs of the two coins after getting complaints from the U.S. Olympic Committee.

In the final version, the letters "USA" will appear on each coin,

either above or inside the interlocking Olympic rings. Officials added the letters and made another minor change because of a licensing agreement between the USOC and the International Olympic Committee.

U.S. coinage production advanced 7 percent last year, thanks to increased demand for round money from banks and businesses.

The federal mints churned out 13 billion coins during 1987, up from the 12.1 billion made in 1986 but still the second smallest total of the 1980s. Lincoln cents accounted for about three-quarters of the 1987 figure, according to reports in the hobby press.

The new hard currency carries a face value of \$586 million, or about \$2.40 worth of pocket change for each U.S. citizen.

Coin production peaked in 1982, when Uncle Sam made 19.5 billion pieces. Some experts

suggest that a lower inflation rate and greater use of credit cards have tempered demand for fresh coins since the early 1980s.

Meanwhile, the government already has produced several million 1988-dated half dollars, which eventually should turn up in banks. No Kennedy halves were made for circulation in 1987 because of a glut of the little-used coins.

At least 30 dealers will sell coins or related collectibles next Sunday at the annual show of the Will County Coin Club. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn near the intersection of Larkin Avenue and Interstate 80 in Joliet.

Other dealers will do business from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. next Sunday at the Lake County Coin Club's annual show at the Waukegan Moose Lodge, 2755 Washington St. Admission is free to both shows.